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AUTHOR Connors, G. Patrick
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ABSTRACT

Chondromalacia is the degeneration of the hyaline cartilage on the under surface of the kneecap. Its causes include patella maltracking (the kneecap does not glide properly over the joint), posttraumatic condition, and chronic overuse. The treatment can be a controlled rehabilitation program, various bracing techniques, foot orthoses, or, in severe cases, surgery. If the knee hurts, the activity responsible for the pain should be discontinued. If the condition persists, the advice of a physician should be sought. (DC)

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Hamilton Hospital BOX H / 1881 WHITE HORSE-HAMILTON SQUARE ROAD / TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08690 / PHONE (609-586-7900)
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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Marie R. Power-Barnes, Director
Public Relations & Marketing
(609) 586-7900, X6840

(by: G. Patrick Connors, A.T.,C. M.Ed.)
Program Director, Hamilton Hospital
Institute for Medicine in Sports

June 10, 1983

CHONDROMALACIA

QUESTION: I am a 32 year old female runner averaging five-seven miles per day. I have been running approximately four years. Six months ago, I started developing left knee pain which was diagnosed as chondromalacia. Is there anything other than exercises that I can do to help it and should I continue to run even if I have pain?

MARTHA
YARDVILLE

ANSWER: Chondromalacia is defined as a degeneration of the hyaline cartilage on the under surface of the knee cap. The cause of this condition has been related to a wide array of various faults or problems. The forthmost cause of this condition in women athletes has been related to what is known as patella maltracking. This simply means that the knee cap does not glide over the knee joint properly. The other problems for athletes are primarily related to posttraumatic condition or chronic overuse syndroms. The treatment for this ailment differs as does the cause for the condition. Accompanied with a supervised and controlled rehab program is the usage of various physical agents, most of which cannot be utilized without the written order of a licensed physician. One may also employ the use of various bracing techniques and at times the aid of foot orthoses has helped. However, I suggest you do not attempt to utilize any of these devices without contacting a physician.

I must also add that in some cases surgery has been recommended. The short term success rate of some of these surgical procedures has been well documented in the various orthopedic journals. However, most surgeons that I have worked with agree that surgery is only recommended in the most severe cases.

To answer the second part of your question, I feel that when it hurts, your body is telling you something and that you should listen to it. Therefore, it is my opinion that you should discontinue your running activity when it does hurt and if the condition continues seek the advice of a physician who may direct you to a well structured rehab and treatment program.

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If you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding this article or any facet of sports medicine, write to the Institute for Medicine in Sports, P.O. Box 2621, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690 or phone (609) 586-4277. If you wish to make an appointment for physician clinic, sports rehab/physical therapy, cardio pulmonary rehab or a consultation regarding conditioning, nutrition and/or prevention call (609) 586-7900 X6677.

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